

Israel. In my trips to Israel, I have had a chance to witness the resiliency and resolve of its citizens.

So I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, to join with Jews of the Southwest to celebrate our heritage around the world, as well as to recognize Israel's 61st anniversary.

NATIONAL TEACHER DAY

(Mr. KLEIN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Today, I rise in recognition of the National Education Association's National Teacher Day. Few professionals touch as many lives as teachers do. They provide us with the knowledge and skills we need to succeed in life, and their dedication deserves national recognition.

That is why I have introduced legislation again this year calling for the establishment of an officially recognized National Teacher Day.

The education of our children is critical to the future success of our country, and despite limited compensation and increasingly high expectation, our teachers rise to the challenge each and every day.

Teachers are a critical component to increasing our global competitiveness and once again establishing our country as a world leader in science, math, and other fields.

My mother was a public school teacher, and I know the hard work that she put in to ensure that every one of her students was prepared to succeed in the classroom and in life.

To all the teachers of south Florida and across the country, thank you.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes.

JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the fourth annual Jewish American Heritage Month, which takes place in communities across the country each May.

Jewish American Heritage Month promotes awareness of the contributions American Jews have made to the fabric of American life, from technology and literature to entertainment, politics, and medicine.

As we are all well aware, the foundation of our country is built upon the strengths of our unique cultures and backgrounds. Yet, while our diversity

is America's strength, ignorance and intolerance about the culture, traditions, and accomplishments of the Jewish people are still prevalent. Jews make up only 2 percent of our Nation's population, and, therefore, most Americans have had few interactions with Jews and our traditions.

I personally experienced this lack of knowledge when I was a student in the dorms at the University of Florida. While at school, a fellow student noticed my name and said, "Wow, you're Jewish? I've seen pictures, but I've never met a real one."

Now, this girl did not mean any harm, but the limited understanding of the Jewish people and our historical role in the Nation's development leads to ignorance, which contributes to stereotypes and prejudices.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's most recent Hate Crimes Statistics report, 68.4 percent of criminal incidents motivated by religious bias stemmed from anti-Jewish prejudice. Additionally, due to a lack of understanding, some Americans perceive Judaism as only a religion, when, in reality, Judaism is a religion, a rich tradition, and a culture that dates back 4,000 years. Mr. Speaker, this is why communities across the country have come together to celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month.

A few years ago, the Jewish community in South Florida approached me with the idea to honor the contributions of American Jews with a designated month each year. As the concept gained momentum, 250 of my colleagues joined me as original cosponsors of a resolution urging the President to issue a proclamation for this month. Senator ARLEN SPECTER led the effort in the Senate, and together the House and Senate unanimously passed a resolution supporting the creation of Jewish American Heritage Month. In May of 2006, we celebrated this important occasion for the first time and have been celebrating each May since then.

Now, the month of May introduces Jewish culture to the entire country and dispels harmful prejudices. Like Black History Month and Women's History Month, Jewish American Heritage Month recognizes the abundance of contributions American Jews have made to the United States over the last 353 years. It is my hope that by providing the framework for the discussion of Jewish culture and contributions to our Nation, we will be able to reduce the ignorance that ultimately leads to anti-Semitism.

One way Jewish American Heritage Month counters these prejudices is by providing educators the opportunity to include American Jews in discussions of history, as well as highlighting the leadership of members of the Jewish community in significant historical events.

For example, it might surprise many to learn that it was an American Jew, Irving Berlin, who wrote the lyrics to

the song, "God Bless America." Even the very foundations of our country were impacted by Jews. Haym Salomon, a Jewish man, was one of the largest financiers of the American Revolution War. And Rabbi Joachim Prinz was a passionate civil rights activist, appearing on the podium just moments before Dr. Martin Luther King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. And the list goes on.

This year's Jewish American Heritage Month has been packed with programs celebrating the contributions of American Jewry to our countries with movies, cultural exhibitions, speakers, and innovative educational curricula. Right here in Washington, the United Jewish Communities and the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington will be hosting a reception for Members of Congress and members of the Jewish community. J Street will also be hosting a reception to celebrate May as Jewish American Heritage Month with Members of Congress, their staff, and the Jewish community.

But that is not all. The Library of Congress and the National Archives and Records Administration will be hosting lectures, exhibits, and discussions about Jewish contributions to America. In my home State of Florida, there will be a celebration of Jewish contributions to the civil rights movement, and the major league Florida Marlins baseball team will host a Jewish Heritage game, with kosher food and Jewish music in between innings. Cincinnati will be hosting lectures, including one on President Lincoln's solid relationship with American Jews. And Wyoming will host a festival celebrating Jewish food, and we all know how much we love food! Events are also scheduled to occur in New York, California, Texas, and other States around the country.

Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way in recent years to promote appreciation for the multicultural fabric of the United States of America. It is our responsibility to continue this education.

If we, as a Nation, are to prepare our children for the challenges that lie ahead, then teaching diversity is a fundamental part of that promise. Together, we can help achieve this goal of understanding with the celebration of Jewish American Heritage Month.

I thank my colleagues for their support, and call on all Americans to observe this special month by celebrating the many contributions of Jewish culture throughout our Nation's history.

RECOGNIZING THE SUDAN NETTES GIRLS BASKETBALL 2009 STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to congratulate